101 things you can do to tackle climate change & reduce your impact on the natural environment

There's so much to think about when it comes to the climate & ecological emergencies. One is caused by our emissions of CO_2 and other warming gases, which are making the planet hotter and leading to extreme weather events and fire, flooding, ice-melt and stuff. And the other is caused by the damage we're doing to the natural environment, which is leading to biodiversity loss and the destruction of ecosystems. Each is making the other worse, so anything you can do to reduce your warming gas emissions and your impact on the natural environment the better.

Here are some suggestions (words underlined in blue are links to further information):

1. Feed the birds – it's nice to have birds twittering around and it's good for nature too. By feeding them you help them survive despite the many natural and human-made hazards, which creates a healthier environment and supports biodiversity, which in turn captures more CO_2.

2. Rewild part of your garden – the fashion for many years has been to have a nice, neat garden with a good patch of lawn and well-stocked flower beds to the side and perhaps in the middle. The trouble is that this type of garden isn't always as helpful to nature as less neat, wilder approaches are. Leaving piles of sticks and leaves, letting grasses grow taller, allowing trees to grow where their seeds fall, all that kind of stuff is really helpful to nature, which is good for biodiversity and capturing CO_2 in the plants and soil.

3. Stop buying things with plastic packaging – plastic is one of the great inventions of the 20th century. It's incredibly versatile and useful and is absolutely everywhere. The trouble is that, while some plastic is used for years, other plastic is single-use and is thrown away withing a few days or weeks of being created. Plastics are harmful to natural environments in so many ways and it would better if we used it with more thought. It's difficult not buying things with plastic but a lot of the time you could buy an alternative that uses less or no plastic, or simply not buy a product.

4. Create a bee hotel – bees are essential to pollinate plants and maintain a healthy environment. Creating bee-friendly spaces helps improve biodiversity. It's also nice to hear bees buzzing about the place. And don't be scared of wasps they perform a similar function to bees.

5. Walk or cycle rather than drive – walking and cycling are good for your health and don't emit huge amounts of CO_2 or cause a lot of damage to natural environments. So give it a try.

6. Use a bus or the train where possible – buses and trains release less CO_2 per person than travelling by car or plane. A friend of mine who lives near Telford had a business meeting in Frankfurt, she went by train through the Channel Tunnel and a colleague flew from Birmingham Airport. They left at approximately the same time and my friend arrived at the hotel they were staying at 15 minutes later than the person who had flown.

7. Dig a pond – ponds are a great place for wildlife and, if you have space for one and the energy to dig it, they're great to have.

8. Stop using weedkiller – many people use weedkillers to keep their patios tidy and prevent weeds. The trouble is that weedkillers kill all sorts of other plants, animals and micro-organisms, which destroys biodiversity and nature's ability to absorb CO_2.

9. Recycle plastic, glass and metal – our rubbish black bin that we put out for fortnightly collection is never anywhere near full these days. Our plastics, glass and metal recycling box, on the other hand, is generally overflowing. Recycling is an important part of developing circular economies, where we reduce our use of stuff, reuse or recycle it rather than throwing it away.

10. Buy locally grown veg – if you can't or don't want to grow your own veg, buying from a grower local to you reduces your carbon footprint because the veg hasn't had to be transported great distances and may not come with as much packaging.

11. Read the Zero Carbon Shropshire Plan

12. Don't use slug pellets – what's the point of slugs? They're solitary, slimy and slow. They also chomp through flowers, shrubs and veg that we human's like to grow. However, they're part of nature's biodiversity and contribute to a healthy environment. Killing them using slug pellets can be harmful to other animals (my cat died from eating a neighbour's slug pellets when I was a kid), plants and micro-organisms.

13. Change your electricity provider – some electricity providers generate the electricity they sell by burning fossils fuels, others don't or don't burn as much fossil fuels. Simply by switching to a renewable provider you can reduce your carbon footprint and send a message to the companies that use fossil fuels to clean up their act.

14. Grow your own vegetables – if you've got even a small garden growing your own veg is fun and you get to eat and give away what you grow. If you haven't got a garden you can still grow certain veg in pots indoors, such as tomatoes, strawberries, spinach, lettuce and bean sprouts. Growing your own veg is good for your health and good for the environment.

15. Eat less meat – cows, pigs and sheep can take up a lot of land to live and grow and cows and sheep belch up methane, which is one of the dreaded warming gases, along with CO_2. Eating less meat, eating locally produced or eating sustainably reared meat are all ways of reducing your damaging emissions. It can be fun too, given that there are a lot of new recipes you will be able to try out.

16. Eat fewer dairy products – oh blimey! No, dairy products aren't ideal either. That's milk and all your lovely cheeses. Doh! It's because cows and sheep belch up a lot of methane which, along with CO_2 and the other warming gases, contributes to global warming. However, by buying locally produced milk and cheese and/or consuming less of both you can reduce your emissions.

17. Change your bank – some banks invest a lot of money in fossil fuel companies, which pump out CO_2 to get at the oil, coal and gas they sell and then the oil, coal and gas pumps out more CO_2 when burnt for power. Switching to a bank that doesn't invest in the fossil fuel industry is easy reduces your carbon footprint, sends a message to banks to clean up their act and doesn't cost you a penny. This really is something most people can do that will make a real and lasting difference.

18. Leave piles of old twigs and branches in your garden – it's not tidy but it's good for nature and increases the amount of CO_2 your garden or local areas can capture.

19. Sign the Pledge for a Zero Carbon Shropshire by 2030

20. Turn down the heating and put on a jumper – have you ever thought *'Phew! It's hot in here'* and opened a window when you could have turned the heating down or off. Or have you ever thought *'Blimey! It's cold in here'* and turned the heating on when you could have just put on a jumper. Save the planet and money too. Can't be bad.

21. Buy organically grown veg – organically grown veg tends to be more expensive than other veg but sometimes it tastes nicer (the deathly white celery available in many supermarkets versus vibrant green, coconut smelling organic celery, for example) and it's better for the planet. This is because it doesn't use chemical fertilizers and insecticides that kill plants, animals and micro-organisms, which turns healthy soil into lifeless dirt and greatly reduces its ability to capture carbon.

22. Reduce the amount of things you buy – this one speaks for itself doesn't it. If we all bought fewer things we would reduce our carbon footprint.

23. Reuse things rather than throwing them away – this is part of the reduce, reuse, recycle approach. Instead of throwing things away, think how you can reuse them. So, glass and plastic pots can be used to grow seedlings in, old pallets can be turned into garden furniture, newspapers can be composted …

24. If you can't reuse something, recycle it – throwing anything away loses the value of what it's made up of and clutters up landfill and the oceans with sometimes toxic waste and gives off methane as it rots away. Recycle anything you can't reuse, such as old mobile phones, washing machines, TVs, cardboard boxes, plastic bottles, furniture, clothing, batteries …

25. [Donate to charity shops](#) – giving to charity shops is a great way to get rid of stuff you no longer want or need and it benefits others, reduces your carbon footprint and doesn't fill up land-fills or the oceans with loads of rubbish.

26. Use a [laptop rather than a desktop PC](#) – laptops generally use a lot less power than desktops, so the CO_2 emissions from generating the power to run them is less.

27. Switch off lights if you don't need them – obvious really this one isn't it.

28. Don't leave [electrical items on standby](#) when not in use – leaving electrical items on standby uses electricity, which adds to your CO_2 emissions and costs money.

29. Use [repair cafes or start your own](#) – repair cafes are a place you can take stuff that's broken and get it fixed by people who know what they're doing. This saves throwing stuff away, which adds to land-fill or ocean dumping, and replacing it with a new item, which increases your CO_2 footprint.

30. [Buy from charity shops](#) – buying pre-owned stuff is cheaper than buying new and reduces your carbon footprint. For example, a new jumper has added CO_2 to the atmosphere due to the manufacturing process and transporting it from factory to shop, which can be a huge amount if it was made in another country. Pre-owned items from charity shops, on the other hand, don't emit CO_2 every time they change hands and are usually transported very locally.

31. [Buy an eBike](#) – a decent eBike is expensive so not everyone can afford one but, if you can, they make riding long distance or up and down hills a hell of lot easier than your standard push bike. Getting an eBike, then, means you're more likely to use it instead of hopping in the car.

32. Buy an [electric vehicle (EV)](#) – EVs are getting more affordable and with a better and better range every year. Although there are CO_2 emissions associated with their manufacture and old batteries need to be recycled by specialists, EV use can be free of CO_2 and other emissions.

33. [Plant a tree](#) – scientists are developing all sorts of technologies to capture and store CO_2 from the atmosphere to tackle global warming. They haven't come up with the perfect solution just yet, but nature has. It's called a tree! Trees take in CO_2 to live and grow, and they store the carbon in their roots, trunks, branches and leaves. Trees are also beautiful to look at, great to sit under, can provide fruits and nuts, are hugely beneficial to other forms of wildlife … You get the idea. Trees are the best!

34. Don't stress [about molehills](#) – molehills can be a nuisance if you want to play croquet on your lawn or use it for morris dancing practice, but otherwise aren't really a problem. They make a bland lawn look lived in and provide good soil for compost, as well as contributing to a healthy environment and biodiversity, which are good for carbon capture.

35. Volunteer for a wildlife organisation – there are loads of wildlife organisations out there and they all need volunteers. It can be great fun working with wildlife and helps create a healthy environment, invigorates biodiversity and improves carbon capture.

36. Don't trim your hedge so neatly – trimming hedges has been made a lot easier with the invention of electric hedge trimmers, however, unless you're powering your hedge trimmer with from a renewable source, such as wind, solar or hydro, it's adding CO_2 to the atmosphere. Worse than this though, if you trim a hedge too neatly, particularly leylandii, it makes it more difficult for birds to nest in them, which reduces the number of birds, insects that they bring with them, bird droppings in the hedge which feed the soil, and makes the environment less healthy than it otherwise would be.

37. Volunteer in a charity shop – because charity shops are part of a circular economy, where waste is reused or recycled, working in a charity shop is part of the circular economy too, meaning you are helping reduce CO_2 emissions as well as the charity you volunteer for.

38. Compost your vegetable waste – just because we don't want to eat old carrot peelings, the hard rooty bit at the end of an onion or the bruised and blackened bits of potatoes, doesn't mean there aren't lots of worms, micro-organisms and insects that don't relish this stuff. And, of course, the worms and insects are food for birds and small mammals. So composting your veg waste improves biodiversity and makes a healthier environment able to capture more CO_2, and you can use it in the garden.

39. Insulate your home better – if you own your own home you can save money and the planet by ensuring your insulation is as good as it can be – there are grants available to help you. If you rent your home you can still ask your landlord to ensure it is insulated as well as it could be – given that grants are available it might not cost them that much and will make the property more desirable. In addition, it will reduce your bills.

40. Use cardboard beneath bark chippings to prevent weeds – cardboard is great stuff as it can prevent weeds growing in your flower beds and will rot down to invigorate the soil, and healthy soil is a a fantastic carbon store.

41. Never use compost that contains peat – when the sun dries peat compost spread on or dug into your beds the carbon it contains quickly turns into CO_2, which contributes to global warming. Plus, peat bogs from which the peat is taken emit the CO_2 due to the mining method and a once biodiverse carbon sink is destroyed. It's plain daft.

42. Practise no-dig gardening – digging is hard work and not always the best option. In addition, digging turns over the top 8 inches of soil and the mini-beasts that thrive nearer the surface are taken deeper and those that thrive deeper down are brought nearer to the surface. Digging, therefore, kills a lot of mini-beasts in the soil, which makes the soil less healthy and unable to capture carbon so effectively.

43. Allow 'weeds' to grow – getting stressed by weeds is a mugs game. It doesn't matter what you do, they always come back. Better to reframe your idea of what a garden should look like and allow a certain amount of weeds to flourish among your flowers and shrubs. Weeds are beneficial to the soil and other plants and animals, creating a healthier environment which is good for carbon capture. Besides, dandelions, nettles and other so called weeds look fantastic!

44. Check how your pension is invested – if you're lucky enough to have a private pension do you know where the pension company is investing your money to make it grow? If it's investing in fossils fuels you could think about asking them to invest in other areas – some pensions have online portals where you can indicate the types of investments you want to make. Doing something as simple as this can reduce your emissions and tell the pension companies to stop investing in fossil fuels.

45. Check out community energy for your local area – community energy is the delivery of community-led renewable energy, energy demand reduction and energy supply projects, whether wholly owned and/or controlled by communities or through partnership with commercial or public sector partners.

46. Ask Shropshire Council or Telford & Wrekin Council or your local council to stop cutting grass verges by roads – why do we cut grass verges on roads. It costs lots of money and pumps out CO_2 and other harmful gases into the atmosphere. If we didn't cut the verges it would save money and allow all sorts of plants, birds, small mammals and insects to reclaim these spaces, which in turn would mean a healthier environment, increased biodiversity and better carbon capture.

47. Close windows when the heating is on – heating your home makes sense, heating outside your home is a little bit bonkers! It costs money and adds to your carbon footprint.

48. Rake leaves into a pile a leave them there – leaf piles are great for wildlife, which is great for the planet. You can also use leaf mould on your garden.

49. Get double or triple-glazing – if you haven't got double or triple-glazing this will significantly add to you heating bills and, unless you are heating your home with renewables, your carbon footprint. Ask your landlord to invest in double or triple-glazing or invest in it yourself if you own your own home.

50. Get a smaller car – unless you drive a zero emissions car, such as an electric, the bigger the car, the more CO2 it will emit. Simple as that!

51. Bleed your radiators regularly – if your radiator is hot at the bottom and cool at the top this is an indication that there is air in the system which is collecting in the radiators preventing them from warming up properly. This means your room isn't as warm as it could be, which is a waste of money and increases your CO_2 emissions due to you cranking up the heating to try and make the place warmer.

52. Get rid of your oil or gas boiler – oil is a fossil fuel and therefore gives off a lot of CO_2 when you burn it to heat your home. Switch to a renewable form of heating your home or ask you landlord to. It will be expensive but grants may be available.

53. Check out grants that are available – there are a number of grants available to help you make your home more eco-friendly.

54. Only buy ethically sourced wood – wood is very eco-friendly but only if it is sourced ethically, leaving forests intact for future generations.

55. Holiday in the UK – travelling abroad and enjoying other countries and cultures is great fun but if it involves flying it means significant CO_2 emissions. If possible, you could travel to your destination by train or holiday in the UK.

56. Travel abroad by train, boat or economy class if by plane – if you have to travel abroad, think about how you can reduce your emissions. It might be fun!

57. Keep chickens – keeping chickens is a fun thing to do but will trash your garden unless you fence them off. The upsides are you can feed them scraps, they'll improve the soil, which is good for carbon capture, and they'll lay eggs that you can eat yourself or give to family and friends, which involves less carbon emissions than if you bought them in a shop.

58. Buy energy efficient light-bulbs – probably don't need to say this as everyone has energy efficient light bulbs don't they? But they'll save on your electricity costs and reduce your carbon footprint.

59. Build a hot composter to compost all your food waste – composting is great for your garden and for wildlife but you can't compost things like bones and cold composting can attract rats if you try to compost cooked food, for example. If you haven't got a garden you can still make compost and give it away to family and friends who do.

60. Take your litter home with you – Duh! Why wouldn't you? Anything that can be recycled, recycle it. Anything that has to be binned, bin it.

61. Ask Shropshire Council or Telford & Wrekin Council or your local council for more cycle paths – it's all very well telling people to cycle rather than drive to save the planet but even quiet roads can get busy at times. Decent cycle paths that are safe and well maintained would make cycling a much more attractive option.

62. Observe nature – Eh! How does that help? Well, by observing the number of insects on a flowering shrub, a squirrel skipping about in a tree or sparrows twittering in a hedge, you not only have a peaceful moment, you get an idea of what a healthy environment actually is. It isn't necessarily neatly mown and edged lawns, a beautifully weeded patio or expertly trimmed privet. No, it's a bit scruffier and haphazard than that. Maybe if we allowed our gardens to be a bit scruffy and haphazard that would create a healthier environment for wildlife … Or have I gone too far with that suggestion? Just a thought.

63. Refuse bags and packaging in shops – supermarkets are great aren't they! They sell all sorts of stuff and provide recycling facilities for the packaging they sold the stuff in. What!?!! Why don't they just sell you the stuff you want and leave out the packing you don't want. Think of all the emissions that come from manufacturing and recycling packaging, most of which is not necessary.

64. Use eco-friendly cleaning products – back in the eighties we used eco-friendly washing powder which made my work shirts look kind of grey and left ugly looking stains. That was then though! Nowadays eco-friendly cleaning products are much better and, as the name suggests, are better for the environment.

65. Read Zero Carbon Britain produced by the Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT)

66. Ask Shropshire Council or Telford & Wrekin Council or your local council to stop building roads – new roads are good money spinners, providing income for local businesses, jobs for local residents and opportunities for development once completed. Unfortunately, the more roads you build the more traffic drives along them, pumping out CO_2 and other warming gases, quite apart from destroying natural environments in their construction. At some point all councils, everywhere, will need to bite the bullet and stop building roads and focus on creating jobs and wealth via sustainable routes.

67. Put the washing on at a lower temperature – I met a young New Zealander many years ago and she asked me why people in the UK boil their washing. Apparently, we wash our clothes at a higher temperature than other countries. I don't know if it's true or not but try washing your clothes at a lower temperature and see how they come out. Remember, the lower the temperature the less energy you use and the better for the environment it is. Oh, and it saves you money too.

68. Use Park & Ride – every time you get out of your car and get on a bus reduces your CO_2 emissions.

69. Only fill the kettle with as much water as you're going to use – filling your kettle up to boil water then using only a bit of it and leaving the rest to go cold is a waste of money and increases your carbon footprint. Just boil the water you need.

70. Turn leftovers into another meal or a snack – when we have a bowl of pasta with lightly fried courgettes and finely grated hard cheese of an evening (yes, I know, the hard cheese is not good for our emissions), I'm never worried if we can't eat it all as I fry it up the next day for lunch. It's delicious! Rather than throwing food away why not turn those leftovers into another meal.

71. Eat more fruit – making sure it's in season and grown locally or imported by boat rather than plane.

72. Put solar panels on your roof – if you can afford solar panels and your home is suitable for them they can reduce your electricity bills and generate clean energy.

73. Use an online tool to measure your carbon footprint – or you could set up a group to help each other reduce your carbon footprints and your impact on the natural environment.

74. Only buy Fairtrade imported goods – helping lift people out of poverty and ensuring equality will help reduce emissions. Check out the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals to see how.

75. Eat roadkill – just kidding! Probably not a good idea as you don't know where it's been. However, you could [investigate the amount of wildlife that is killed each year on the roads](#) and maybe slow down to try and avoid animal related collisions, preserving wildlife and avoiding damage to your vehicle which will cost you money.

76. Ask [Shropshire Council](#) or [Telford & Wrekin Council](#) or your local council to stop cutting hedgerows – this is closely linked to the go on a [hedge-laying course](#) entry but, basically, it's absolutely potty to drive great big tractors around shredding hedgerows, destroying habitat for birds, small mammals and insects, and making our environment less healthy and reducing biodiversity. Councils need to come up with a better plan that works with nature rather than shredding it.

77. Go on a [hedge-laying course](#) – every year hedges are assaulted by giant shredding machines mounted on tractors which pump out CO_2 and other noxious gases. It makes them look a mess and destroys habitat for birds, small mammals and insects. Laying hedges maintains and enhances the natural environment and supports biodiversity but hedge-laying is a dying art that will surely be resurrected very soon.

78. Watch [Climate Change – The Facts](#) by the BBC – and [if you don't have a TV licence it's on YouTube](#) as well.

79. Check out the [17 Sustainability Goals](#) agreed by the United Nations

80. Take a look at this [10 minute video by Shropshire Wildlife Trust](#) on Shropshire's Climate Crisis.

81. Recycle your old mobile phone – most charity shops accept mobile phones for recycling in all conditions for refurbishment or recycling.

82. Give your [old specs](#) to charity – they may be no use to you but the frames and lenses can be reused by people who can't afford spectacles. This not only helps these people but saves your specs going to landfill.

83. Only buy strawberries in season – this is a personal opinion but British strawberries taste better than imported ones and have a smaller CO_2 footprint. When they're out of season eat something else.

84. Download [Giki Badge](#) to your phone to help you find sustainable and healthy products in UK supermarkets

85. Build a [hedgehog home](#) – help hedgehogs by building them a safe place to over-winter and breed. This helps nature maintain a healthy environment and supports biodiversity. Healthy environments capture more carbon than unhealthy ones.

86. Eat your broccoli stalks – broccoli stalks taste just as nice as the flowery bit we normally eat. Why waste good food?

87. Ask [Shropshire Council](#) or [Telford & Wrekin Council](#) or your local council to improve public transport – the buses round our way are infrequent and too expensive for many residents. Not because the bus companies aren't any good but because they need to charge enough to pay staff, invest in new buses and make a profit. Public transport isn't a service where we should be looking to make a profit as it is vital for a healthy local economy. If public transport was subsidised from the public purse it would surely function more effectively.

88. Don't have bonfires – burning stuff is great fun but it pollutes the environment and contributes to global warming. Better to reuse (as mulches for example), compost or recycle your garden waste in your green bin.

89. Put up a bird box – this will attract birds to your garden, providing a place for them to nest and breed, which helps nature maintain a healthy environment and supports biodiversity. Healthy environments capture more carbon than unhealthy ones.

90. [Bake your own cakes](#) – you could start off by making rock cakes, which take less than half an hour from getting the flour out the cupboard to sitting down to eat your freshly baked bun. They taste great and are responsible for much less CO_2 emissions and packaging waste than if you buy cakes in a shop.

91. [Support food banks](#) – foodbanks are there for people who can't afford to feed themselves or their family – there are about 14 million people in the UK who live below the poverty line, including 4.5 million children. Foodbanks provide vital support to people who need them. They are also an example of a circular economy, where supermarkets donate food that would otherwise go to landfill.

92. Get educated on the climate and ecological emergencies – blimey the climate and ecological emergencies are complicated. The more people who understand how human activity is making them both worse and what we can all do to improve things, the better. Read some articles, follow some blogs, take a course and even join a group. [The Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT)](#) has been talking about this stuff for years and is a great place to start.

93. Share this 101 list with family and friends – taking action to limit your impact on the natural environment and climate change is a great start, sharing what you do with others will take things one step further.

94. Educate others – educating others on what they can do to reduce their carbon emissions and improve the natural environment can be as simple as suggesting to someone they let their garden go a bit scruffy to help nature or switch to a renewable energy supplier, or you might want to start writing a blog or even volunteering for on a zero carbon project such as [Zero Carbon Shropshire](#).

95. Take a course – there are loads of online and in-person courses you could take to help you understand the climate and ecological emergencies better. Some are free, others you have to pay for. Why not book a twenty minute presentation plus questions and discussion from Zero Carbon Shropshire for your local group, school, parish council to get the ball rolling. The email address is admin@zerocarbonshropshire.org

96. Recycle your crisp packets – crisps are truly delicious but the packets cannot be recycled via standard recycling methods, hence you need to collect them up and send them to a recycling project or set up a crisp packet recycling project yourself.

97. Learn about permaculture – permaculture has been around for years and is about the conscious design and maintenance of agriculturally productive ecosystems which have the diversity, stability, and resilience of natural ecosystems. Using permaculture ideas you can have a beautiful, bountiful garden that enhances the natural environment.

98. Recycle old jeans – when your jeans are worn out and you don't want them anymore you can give them to a recycling centre to turn them into cotton to make other garments from. This saves them going to landfill.

99. Open a window rather than using air-con when driving – air-conditioning in your car on a hot day is very nice but it adds to your fuel consumption if you're driving a petrol car and harms performance if you're driving an electric. The more fuel you use, the more CO_2 you pump out into the atmosphere.

100. Do an energy audit of your home – doing an energy audit can help you identify where you use most energy and decide how to reduce your usage, which is good for your pocket and for the planet.

101. Create your own list of things people can do to combat the climate and ecological emergencies – it's fun and you're bound to come up with things we haven't thought of.